

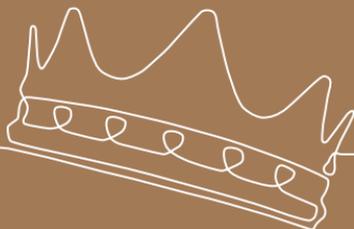
COVENANT^{EFC}

MAY

2022
DEVOTIONAL
JOURNAL

*For you yourselves are fully aware that
the day of the Lord will come
like a thief in the night.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:2



MAY
2022
DEVOTIONAL
JOURNAL

*For you yourselves are fully aware that
the day of the Lord will come
like a thief in the night.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:2

MEMORY VERSES

2022

From 1 & 2 Thessalonians

◆ January

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit

– 1 Thessalonians 1:6 (ESV)

◆ February

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality

– 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (ESV)

◆ March

That each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honour – 1 Thessalonians 4:4 (ESV)

◆ April

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.

– 1 Thessalonians 4:14 (ESV)

◆ May

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. – 1 Thessalonians 5:2 (ESV)

◆ June

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (ESV)

◆ July

See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:15 (ESV)

◆ August

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (ESV)

◆ September

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power. – 2 Thessalonians 1:11 (ESV)

◆ October

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

– 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

◆ November

But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. – 2 Thessalonians 3:3 (ESV)

◆ December

As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.

– 2 Thessalonians 3:13 (ESV)

FOREWORD

BY SENIOR PASTORS

PREPARING TO MEET KING JESUS

What do times of crisis and uncertainty compel us towards? They compel us to confront our own mortality, scrutinise our foundations and evaluate our purpose. Most of all, they compel us to seek the face of God.

As we sought the Lord, He assured us through these verses:

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

– Matthew 16:18-19 (ESV)

In these uncertain times, we can be rested in Jesus because He has promised that He Himself will build His Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail. The keys of the Kingdom of God

are the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ – His incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming. And we are to proclaim it! As the Church, it is our responsibility and privilege to do so. When people believe the Good News, they are able to enter God’s Kingdom.

We are reminded of the charge that the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy as the spiritual leader of the church at Ephesus:

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in

season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”
– 2 Timothy 4:1-4 (ESV)

Hence, this year’s spiritual burden is “Preparing to Meet King Jesus” — make ready God’s Kingdom people to prepare the world to meet King Jesus in eternity. The world is in darkness and pain. The task is urgent. We believe that we are now in the final hour. We have to prepare ourselves and others to meet King Jesus. This is really what the Church is all about.

How can we prepare ourselves to meet King Jesus?

A People Prepared for His Coming: Be Watchful!

In Luke 1:17, John the Baptist’s calling was to prepare the people for the first coming of our Lord. Like him, we are called to prepare the people for Christ’s second coming. We are to be watchful and persevere in prayer, so as to be ready for the coming of the Lord.

A People Prepared to Stand Firm and Take Action: Be Fruitful!

In times of great distress, those who know their God will stand firm and take action (Dan 11:32). This pandemic is a time of harvest. Many people everywhere are looking for hope. So let us stand firm in our calling as a church

We have to prepare ourselves and others to meet King Jesus. This is really what the Church is all about.

(to be disciples of *A Certain Kind* and return the Church to its disciplemaking roots through Authentic Discipleship and Intentional Disciplemaking) and take action to multiply leaders and disciplemakers for great fruitfulness.

A People Prepared in Personal Holiness: Be Faithful!

1 Thessalonians 4:1-3 remind us to guard our hearts and be faithful, for our own personal sanctification and holiness. Let’s be faithful in our personal integrity and walk with God, aligning our lives back to God in holiness and faithfulness.

This Devotional Journal is designed to help you walk daily with God and experience the transforming power of His Word and Spirit as you reflect, pray and obey the Lord in everything. May you be greatly blessed as you prepare yourselves and many others to meet King Jesus!

In Christ,
Rev Tan Kay Kiong and
Rev Tony Yeo

GUIDE TO USING THIS DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

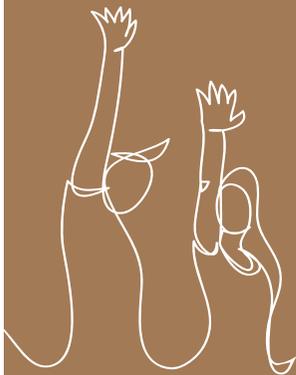
Step 1

PREPARE YOUR HEART IN GOD'S PRESENCE

- ◆ Select a fixed time (preferably in the morning before you begin your day) and a quiet place where you can be alone and undisturbed.
- ◆ Observe a moment of silence as you acknowledge God's presence. Centre down.
- ◆ Begin with a song of worship. Meditate on the lyrics even if you are unfamiliar with the tune. (Refer to the list of worship songs provided.)
- ◆ Ask God to open your heart to hear Him.

NEW IN 2022

You can now type in the PDF copy of the Devotional Journal using your digital device as we have allotted fillable boxes for you to journal your thoughts and prayers without space constraints.



SOMETHING TO PONDER

Examining your life is essential in your faith journey. Your redeemed life as a disciple of Christ deserves careful examining. May you take root and bear fruit in Him!

The English Standard Version (ESV) is the default Bible version translation unless otherwise specified.

Step 2

ALLOW GOD TO **S.O.A.P.** YOU WITH HIS WORD AND SPIRIT

- ◆ Scripture – Take your time to meditate on the Scripture passage for the day. Pause and mull over words and phrases that stand out to you.
- ◆ Observation – Jot down significant insights and reflections from the passage you have read. You may use the guiding questions provided. The “Deeper Reflection” section is to aid your contemplation of the Scripture. It is not to replace your own observation, for the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture to you as you seek Him earnestly.
- ◆ Application – Note down a specific and practical commitment to God's Word for you. Is there a command to obey, a sin to avoid, an example to follow, or a principle to live out? Where appropriate, share your devotional entry with someone.
- ◆ Prayer – Bring your heartfelt response to God in prayer.



PRAYER POINTERS FOR 2022

We have provided prayer pointers for Pastors and Staff every Tuesday and for one of the 3 Faith Exploits (Disciple the Generations, Singapore and the Nations) every Wednesday. Every Thursday, a prayer pointer is included for Outreach/Missions/New Life Leaders. On each Friday, there is a prayer pointer for SGI Leaders (e.g. Zone Mentors, CG Leaders and Assistant CG Leaders). A prayer pointer for Church Board Members is included every Saturday. Please pray for each group as well as any specific individuals whom God may bring to your mind.

PRAY FOR BUSINESS AS MISSIONS (BAM)

*“Come, follow Me,” Jesus said,
“and I will make you fishers of men.”*

MATTHEW 4:19 (BSB)

OUR WORK IS OUR WORSHIP. OUR BUSINESS IS

an effective platform for evangelism, reaching out to the multitudes of lost people who are seeking the meaning and purpose of life. We interact and do business with them daily. As God’s sons and daughters through faith in Jesus Christ, we are God’s co-workers, royal priests and ambassadors of Christ. God has placed us in the marketplace with a command to love our neighbours as ourselves and to tell them the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Currently, Covenant BAM hosts three BAM Fellowships in Singapore and one in Manila. These businessowners’ fellowships do not exist to teach Christian businessowners (already experts themselves) how to run their businesses, but to advocate, remind and teach them how Christian stewards ought to run their God-given businesses in the light of the Bible’s teachings. Covenant BAM sees our businesses as our altars of worship to God. We serve God where we are and the businesses themselves are divine platforms for the Gospel proclamation and for making disciples of Jesus Christ.

PRAY FOR:

COVENANT BAM TEAM

- Unity, oneness, harmony and Spirit-led ministry
- Humility and total submission to God’s plans and purposes
- The Lord to raise up willing and able Covenanters to serve in BAM’s growing ministry and outreach

BAM COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECT

- Divine guidance, provision and direction in the implementation of the Nepal Integrated Buffalo Farm Project. This project comprises two primary objectives:
 - To lift villagers out of poverty by loaning them buffalos and buying milk from them at consistent, fair and reasonable prices. The profits from the milk production factory will be utilised to support the buffalo loan programme.
 - To establish the Buffalo Farming Training Centre to improve yield on milk production and to build relationships in the training and social setting, with the aim of doing evangelism and building a Disciple Making Church Plant (DCP) with local partners.

BAM FELLOWSHIPS (IN AND OUTSIDE SINGAPORE)

- Divine appointments to establish more church-based BAM Fellowships within and outside Singapore, with the aim of establishing missional communities to shine into the darkness of the business world, and to mobilise businesspeople to be fishers of men and planters of DCPs in their respective nations.

WORSHIP SONGS

MAY – JUNE

ANCIENT OF DAYS

Verse

Blessing and honour, glory and power
Be unto the Ancient of Days
From every nation all of creation
Bow before the Ancient of Days

Chorus

Every tongue in heaven and earth shall declare Your glory
Every knee shall bow at your throne in worship
You will be exalted, O God
And Your Kingdom shall not pass away
O Ancient of Days

Bridge

Your kingdom shall reign over all the earth
Sing unto the Ancient of Days
For none can compare to Your matchless worth
Sing unto the Ancient of Days

Gary Sadler | Jamie Harvill

© 1992 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI Song # 798108

CCLI Licence # 324618

HOPE OF THE NATIONS

Verse

Jesus, hope of the nations
Jesus, comfort for all who mourn
You are the source of heaven's hope on earth
Jesus, light in the darkness
Jesus, truth in each circumstance
You are the source of heaven's light on earth

Pre-Chorus

In history, You lived and died
You broke the chains, You rose to life

Chorus

You are the hope, living in us
You are the Rock, in whom we trust
You are the light, shining for all the world to see
You rose from the dead, conquering fear
Our Prince of Peace, drawing us near
Jesus our hope, living for all who will receive
(Lord we believe)
(Lord we believe)
(Lord we believe)

Ending

Lord we believe
(Jesus hope of the nations)
Lord we believe
(Jesus hope of the nations)
Lord we believe
(Jesus Lord we believe)
Lord we believe

Brian Doerksen

© 2002 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI Song # 3540703

CCLI Licence # 324618

A THOUSAND HALLELUJAHS

Verse 1

Who else would rocks cry out to worship?
Whose glory taught the stars to shine?
Perhaps creation longs to have the words to sing
But this joy is mine

Chorus

With a thousand hallelujahs
We magnify Your name
You alone deserve the glory
The honour and the praise
Lord Jesus, this song is forever Yours
A thousand hallelujahs
And a thousand more

Verse 2

Who else would die for our redemption?
Whose resurrection means I'll rise?
There isn't time enough to sing of all You've done
But I have eternity to try

Bridge

Praise to the Lord
To the Lamb
To the King of heaven
Praise for He rose
Now He reigns
We will sing forever

Brooke Ligertwood | Phil Wickham | Scott Ligertwood
© 2022 Brooke Ligertwood Designee (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)
Phil Wickham Music (Fair Trade Music Publishing [c/o Essential Music Publishing LLC])
Simply Global Songs (Fair Trade Music Publishing [c/o Essential Music Publishing LLC])
For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
CCLI Song # 7190270
CCLI Licence # 324618

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Verse

Won't You Lord
Take a look at our hands
Everything we have
Use it for Your plan
Won't You Lord
Take a look at our hearts
Mould it, refine it
As You set us apart

Chorus

We want to run to the altar
And catch the fire
To stand in the gap
Between the living and the dead
Give us a heart of compassion
For a world without vision
We will make a difference
Bringing hope to our land

Bridge

We will answer the call
To build this church without walls
Let Your glory be shown
Bring salvation to the lost
To the lost

Teo Poh Heng, Toh Kok Yew
@cityworshipsg

GREAT ARE YOU LORD

Verse

You give life, You are love
 You bring light to the darkness
 You give hope, You restore every heart that is broken
 And great are You, Lord

Chorus

It's Your breath in our lungs
 So we pour out our praise
 We pour out our praise
 It's Your breath in our lungs
 So we pour out our praise to You only

Bridge

And all the earth will shout Your praise
 Our hearts will cry, these bones will sing
 Great are You, Lord
 (Repeat)

David Leonard | Jason Ingram | Leslie Jordan
 © 2012 Integrity's Alleluia! Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))
 Integrity's Praise! Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))
 Open Hands Music (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC)
 So Essential Tunes (Admin. by Essential Music Publishing LLC)
 For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
 CCLI Song # 6460220
 CCLI Licence # 324618

O FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES

Verse 1

O for a thousand tongues to sing
 My great Redeemer's praise
 The glories of my God and King
 The triumphs of His grace

Verse 2

If eloquence I could display
 And every language sing
 A thousand words could never say
 The praise I have for Thee

Chorus 1

Hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah
 All praise to our God

Verse 3

Before the throne we'll sing the song
 With saints from every age
 With thousands times
 Ten thousand strong
 We'll praise His holy name

Chorus 2

Hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah
 All praise to our God
 Hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah
 All praise to our King

Verse 4

A thousand years will be as one
 When face to face I see
 The splendid beauty of the Son
 The One who died for me

Charles Wesley | Ralph E. Hudson | Thomas Miller
 © 2010 Gateway Create Publishing (Admin. by Integrity Music)
 For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
 CCLI Song # 5758366
 CCLI Licence # 324618

HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD

Verse 1

The splendour of the King
Clothed in majesty
Let all the earth rejoice
All the earth rejoice
He wraps Himself in light
And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice
Trembles at His voice

Chorus

How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, all will see
How great, how great is our God

Verse 2

Age to age He stands
And time is in His hands
Beginning and the end
Beginning and the end
The Godhead, three in one
Father, Spirit, Son
The Lion and the Lamb
The Lion and the Lamb

Bridge

Name above all names
Worthy of all praise
My heart will sing “How great is our God!”

Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash | Jesse Reeves
© 2004 Wondrously Made Songs (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch));
sixsteps Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.); worshipttogether.com songs
(Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)
CCLI Song # 4348399
CCLI Licence # 324618

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOUR

Verse 1

Jesus, beautiful Saviour
God of all majesty, risen King

Verse 2

Lamb of God, holy and righteous
Blessed Redeemer, bright morning star

Pre-Chorus

All the heavens shout Your praise
All creation bows to worship You

Chorus

How wonderful, how beautiful
Name above every name, exalted high
How wonderful, how beautiful
Jesus Your name
Name above every name, Jesus

Bridge

I will sing forever
Jesus I love You
Jesus I love You

Ending

Jesus, beautiful Saviour
(Repeat)

Henry Seeley
© 2006 Planetshakers Ministries Int. Inc. (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (IMI))
For use solely with the SongSelect Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
CCLI Song # 4807892
CCLI Licence # 324618

IN JESUS' NAME

Verse 1

God is fighting for us
 God is on our side
 He has overcome
 Yes He has overcome
 We will not be shaken
 We will not be moved
 Jesus You are here

Verse 2

Carrying our burdens
 Covering our shame
 He has overcome
 Yes He has overcome
 We will not be shaken
 We will not be moved
 Jesus You are here

Chorus 1

I will live, I will not die
 The resurrection power of Christ
 Alive in me and I am free
 In Jesus' Name

Chorus 2

I will live, I will not die
 I will declare and lift You high
 Christ revealed and I am healed
 In Jesus' Name

Bridge

God is fighting for us
 Pushing back the darkness
 Lighting up the Kingdom
 That cannot be shaken
 In the Name of Jesus
 Enemy's defeated
 And we will shout it out
 Shout it out

Ending

In Jesus' Name
 In Jesus' Name
 In Jesus' Name

Darlene Zschech | Israel Houghton

© 2013 EWI (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.); Integrity Worship Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.); Integrity's Praise! Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.); Sound Of The New Breed (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)
 CCLI Song # 6454638
 CCLI Licence # 324618

THE LION AND THE LAMB

Verse 1

He's coming on the clouds
 Kings and kingdoms will bow down
 And every chain will break
 As broken hearts declare His praise
 For who can stop the Lord Almighty?

Chorus

Our God is the Lion
 The Lion of Judah
 He's roaring with power
 And fighting our battles
 And every knee will bow before Him
 Our God is the Lamb
 The Lamb that was slain
 For the sins of the world
 His blood breaks the chains
 And every knee will bow before the Lion and the Lamb
 Every knee will bow before Him

Verse 2

So open up the gates
 Make way before the King of kings
 The God who comes to save
 Is here to set the captives free
 For who can stop the Lord Almighty?

Bridge

Who can stop the Lord Almighty?
 Who can stop the Lord (Almighty)

Brenton Brown | Brian Johnson | Leeland Mooring
 © 2015 Meaux Mercy (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))
 Thankyou Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))
 The Devil Is A Liar! Publishing (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))
 Bethel Music Publishing (Admin. by SHOUT! Music Publishing)
 For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
 CCLI Song # 7038281
 CCLI Licence # 324618

NOTES

SUN
01

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

◆ What was my high point and my low point for the week?

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

- ◆ What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 1

Resilience:

Getting back up when something gets you down.

Memory Verse

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."
- Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

* Bottom Line

God is always with you.*

* Bible Story

Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1 and 2 - Spread of the Gospel

* Activity

Be Spirit-filled!

Prop: Balloons


BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD05W1>



Give each family member a balloon and ask them to blow it up. Ask everyone what they see inside the balloon. (Answer: We can't see the air inside the balloon, but it is there.)

Use this to illustrate being filled with the Holy Spirit. Get everyone to let go of the balloons and watch them fly around the room as they deflate.

Say, "The air represents the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in us. We can't see the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit is always there. Without the Holy Spirit, we are lifeless like a deflated balloon. The Holy Spirit guides and teaches us in different situations so that we will make good and wise decisions."

* Talk About It

- How do we know that God is always with us?
- What resulted from Peter being led by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1-2)?
- What did you learned about the Holy Spirit in Acts 1 to 2?
- When is it hard to feel that God is with you?
- Have you experienced situations where you just knew that God was involved?

Parents: Share with your family members about a problem you faced which you knew was resolved because "God was there". How did the incident change the way you think or behave?

* Prayer

Thank God for being with us all the time even when we do not see Him. Ask God to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit.

©2021 The reThink Group, Inc. All rights reserved.
www.ThinkOrange.com
Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/May2022



MON
02

Three Dimensions in Growth Process

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13; 4:1-3, 9-10

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the Thessalonians' growth in love and holiness?

APPLICATION

How is God working in my life in my growth in love and holiness?

PRAYER

Lord, as I read and meditate on the Scriptures, I open my mouth that You may feed Me Your Word,¹ and nourish my soul and refresh my heart. Make me to be like a tree planted by the water that extends its roots by a stream, whose leaves remain green when the heat comes, and never cease to yield fruit in the year of drought.²



DEEPER REFLECTION

IF WE ASK, “WHAT IS GOD’S PURPOSE FOR MY LIFE?”, the biblical answer is: Our growth to maturity in Christ toward transformation unto “the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13) and into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:28-29). Our growth is indicated by how our lives have changed. Look at our growth in terms of recent changes: “How has my life changed in the past week...in the past month?” And growth is a process. Paul’s ministry to the Thessalonians shows three dimensions in the process of spiritual growth.

Discipling Work: “we ask you and urge you”, “instructions [that] we gave you” (1 Thess 4:1-2). The discipling work is **verbal**: Asking, urging and giving instructions. Certainly, the source of Paul’s “instructions” was the Word of God. When Jesus was alone with His twelve disciples, He taught them the Scriptures about Himself: “These are **My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you**, that everything **written about Me** in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms...” (Lk 24:44). The discipling work is also **visible**: How the Thessalonians loved was “as we do for you” (v.12). **Disciple’s Walk:** The Thessalonians themselves are to walk in love and holiness as they “received” the “instructions” from Paul (1 Thess 4:1-3, 9-10). We disciple others to change lives, but the responsibility for change belongs to the disciplined. **Divine Work:** As the Thessalonians followed Paul’s teaching and walked in love and holiness, God will make them increase in love and establish them in holiness, as Paul prayed for them (vv.12-13).

¹ Ezekiel 3:2

² Jeremiah 17:7-8

TUE
03

Lordship of Christ in Ministry

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2

OBSERVATION

How is the lordship of Christ evident in Paul's ministry?

APPLICATION

What is it like for me to live and minister “in the Lord Jesus” and “through the Lord Jesus”?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: That God works mightily in their service through the Lord Jesus
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL'S MINISTRY IS UTTERLY CHRISTOCENTRIC, EVEN AS his ministry is an outflow of his Christ-centred life. Paul expresses his Christ-centred life in diverse ways: “my ways in Christ” (1 Cor 4:17), “Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20) and “to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). So then, for Paul, the **emphasis** in ministry is the lordship of Christ: “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord” (2 Cor 4:5). The object of our proclamation of the Gospel – to both believers and non-believers – is not just “Jesus Christ”, but “Jesus Christ **as Lord**”. The goal then is for our own lives and the lives of others whom we minister to are to be marked by “Christ Jesus **my Lord**” (Phil 3:8). But take heed, that what we proclaim is not “ourselves”.

For Paul, the **sphere** of ministry is, “we ask and urge you **in the Lord Jesus**” (v.1). Now, this implies the possibility of our ministry being done not “in the Lord Jesus”. Yes, we can “preach Christ” in the flesh, out of selfish ambition, in competition with others and for personal gains and glory (Phil 1:15-17). Note Paul's emphasis on Christ's lordship: “**Lord Jesus**”.

And for Paul, the **resource** for ministry is, “what instructions we gave you **through the Lord Jesus**” (v.2). We see here again Paul's emphasis on Christ's lordship. A Christian's faith-response to Christian ministry can rest “on God's power” or “on human wisdom” (1 Cor 2:4-5, NIV). Paul tells us that such faith-response is determined by the resource of Christian ministry. In this regard, we will reap what we sow (cf. Gal 6:7-8).

WED
04

Understanding the Will of God

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Ephesians 5:15-17; 1 Corinthians 7:39

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the will of God in these passages?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live my life according to the will of God?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for the Nations: That God's redemptive will prevails in the nations
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL EXHORTS THE THESSALONIANS TO “ABSTAIN FROM

sexual immorality” on the grounds that “sanctification” is “the will of God” (v.3). We do find ourselves asking, “What is God’s will for me concerning...?” or saying “It is God’s will for me to...”. God’s will is dynamic, which requires a holistic understanding.

God’s will for how we are to live our lives **in following Jesus** is revealed in the Word of God. So, **understanding the Scriptures** is critical, for it is through understanding the Scriptures that we understand the will of God. To follow Jesus is to walk like Jesus, who lived His life by the Scriptures (Matt 4:3-4). But “becoming like Christ can never be a simple matter of obeying a set of rules, because we simply do not know what Christ would do or say in all the contemporary circumstances we face”³. So, we need to pray to be “filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all Spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col 1:9) that we may “understand what the will of God is” from the Scriptures and walk carefully and wisely in the particular situations that we are in (Eph 5:15-17).

There is also the part of God fulfilling His will for our lives. Here, we are **passive in God’s will**. God has also given us the **freedom** to make choices, but **within the fence**. A widow is “free to be married to whom **she wishes** (not God!)” – freedom, but “only in the Lord” – the fence (1 Cor 7:39). When we follow Jesus, He will lead and guide us in this freedom (Prov 16:9).

³ J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms* (Abingdon Press, 1993), 37

THU
05

Theological Impetus for High Morality

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

OBSERVATION

How many times is God referred to in this passage and what is the significance of that?

APPLICATION

How can I be God-centred in the area of morality?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To be God-conscious in all their activities
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL EXHORTS THE THESSALONIANS TO WALK “TO PLEASE God” (v.1) – particularly in holiness and specifically to “abstain from sexual immorality” (v.3). Verse 4a is “the most difficult phrase in the whole letter”⁴, which can be translated as “living with his **wife** (*skeous*) in holiness and honour”⁵ or “to control his own **body** (*skeous*)”. The “great majority of modern commentators”⁶ take the former translation, which fits the context with Paul warning against transgressing and wronging one’s brother through sexual immorality (v.6).

Sexual laxity and promiscuity was prevalent in the Graeco-Roman world.⁷ It was “widely accepted that men either could not or would not limit themselves to their wife as their only sexual partner”⁸. Men would have mistresses, slaves who could become their concubines easily, and casual gratification readily available from harlots.⁹ For the Thessalonians, the temptation to conform to such immoral culture, environment and lifestyle was so great that it required Paul’s solemn forewarning and repeated warning (v.6).

Paul gives very strong theological impetus for his warning against sexual immorality: “to please **God**” (v.1), “the will of **God**” (v.3), “know **God**” (v.5), “**God** has called us to holiness” (v.7) and “**God**, who gives **His Holy Spirit**” (v.8). Immoral living is an affront to God Himself: “whoever disregards this, disregards not man **but God**” (v.8). God will judge His people: “**the Lord is an avenger** in these things” (v.6). That “Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess 1:10) does not mean that God will not judge us of our sins at the present time.

⁴ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Thessalonians, The Bible Speaks Today* (IVP, 1991), 82

⁵ G. K. Beale, 1-2 Thessalonians, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (IVP Academic, 2003), 118

⁶ John R. W. Stott, 83

⁷ John R. W. Stott, 81

⁸ John R. W. Stott, 83

⁹ F. F. Bruce, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nelson, 1982), 82

FRI
06

Sex in a God-Given Context

SCRIPTURE Thessalonians 4:1-8; Genesis 2:20-25

OBSERVATION

Why is sexual immorality wrong in God's eyes?

APPLICATION

How do I keep myself sexually pure?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: To walk in faithfulness to God and in marriage
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE ONLY GOD-GIVEN CONTEXT FOR SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

to be experienced is heterosexual and monogamous marriage as God originally instituted at creation (Gen 2:20-25). It means then that God forbids sex in every other context: heterosexual partner before marriage (fornication) or outside marriage (adultery), or in a homosexual relationship.

There is a subtly deceptive form of adultery: emotional adultery. A married Christian may have fallen in love with another person, be emotionally close to each other and physically spend time alone together. And both may relate with each other sexually, but short of sexual intercourse. One may think that it is not wrong, rationalising, "I did not cross the line." In God's eyes, even without sexual contact, it is breaking the one flesh marriage covenant with one's spouse. To God, it is adultery already.

The late John Stott speaks as an unmarried person to the singles concerning abstaining from sexual immorality: "We too must accept this apostolic teaching, however hard it may seem, as God's good purpose both for us and for society. We shall not become a bundle of frustrations and inhibitions if we embrace God's standard, but only if we rebel against it. Christ's yoke is easy [Matt 11:29-30], provided that we submit to it. It is possible for human sexual energy to be redirected...both into affectionate relationships with friends of both sexes and into the loving service of others. Multitudes of Christian singles, both men and women, can testify to this. Alongside a natural loneliness, accompanied sometimes by acute pain, we can find joyful self-fulfilment in the self-giving service of God and other people."¹⁰

¹⁰ John R. W. Stott, 84-85

SAT
07

Rightful Due of the Other

SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

OBSERVATION

What does Paul say about sexual relations in marriage?

APPLICATION

How will I respond to the biblical teaching of mutuality and reciprocity of sexuality in marriage?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: To be a loving servant to their spouse in all things
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

SCRIPTURE PORTRAYS MARRIAGE AS “BOTH A CREATION

ordinance, intended for companionship and procreation, and also since the fall as a divine remedy against sin”¹¹. Sex has a particular place of great importance in marriage. Sex in marriage serves as a protection against “temptation to sexual immorality” (v.2).

In verses 1 to 5, Paul addresses the issue of sex in marriage. There were members in the Corinthian congregation who “advocate total abstinence from sexual union”¹², using the maxim “It is a good thing for a man not to have sexual intimacy with a woman”¹³ (v.1). Paul’s response to this is: Sexual union is a “duty” that a married couple “must fulfil” toward each other (v.3). “Duty” is “literally ‘the payment of what is due’”¹⁴, implying that married couples are “indebted to one another sexually”¹⁵. Why? Because “by the marriage vow each relinquishes the exclusive right to his or her body, and gives the other a claim to it”¹⁶ (v.4). The application that Paul intends is not “You owe me”, but “I owe you”. “You owe me” is selfish demand; “I owe you” is self-giving love. Paul’s emphasis is on the full mutuality and reciprocity of sexuality in marriage – against the prevailing culture of sex being viewed as the husband’s privilege and the wife’s obligation.

On this ground of marital love, Paul gives this exhortation: “Do not deprive one another” in meeting and giving to each other’s sexual needs and fulfilment (v.5a). Note that the backdrop to this exhortation is “so that Satan may not tempt you” (v.5b).

¹¹ John R. W. Stott, 84

¹² Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical & Pastoral Commentary* (Eerdmans, 2006), 101

¹³ Anthony C. Thiselton – his translation of 1 Cor 7:1

¹⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Eerdmans, 1987), 279

¹⁵ Gordon D. Fee, 279

¹⁶ F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, The New Century Bible Commentaries (Eerdmans and Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971), 67

SUN
08

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

◆ What was my high point and my low point for the week?

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

- ◆ What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 2

Resilience:

Getting back up when something gets you down.

Memory Verse

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."
- Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

* Bottom Line

Keep going even when it gets tough.*

* Bible Story

Acts 3:1-4:21 - Peter and John taken to the Sanhedrin

* Activity

Never Give Up!

Props: A lightweight ball or chapteh

Play one of the following games with your family:

- (a) Bounce the ball on the ground.
- (b) Kick the *chapteh*.

Set a game target for everyone, for example, doing it 30 times consecutively. Encourage everyone to go beyond the target and not give up.

Discuss after the activity:

- What challenges did you face in the game?
- What kept you going even when it was hard to meet the game target?

Say, "Despite the challenges they faced, Peter and John continued to talk about Jesus to others. They were put in jail. Because of their "never give up" attitude, 5,000 people came to know Jesus! What motivated them to do it? When we face a problem, we can pray and continue to do our work diligently. Never give up and believe that Jesus will help and guide us in every difficult situation."

* Talk About It

- What were some challenges that Peter and John faced?
- Peter and John continued to teach and talk about Jesus even when they faced challenges. What motivated them to do it?
- How we can train ourselves to bounce back and push through when things get tough, like what Peter and John did?

Parents: Share with your family members about an experience in which you showed resilience in solving a problem. What did you do to keep yourself motivated? How did God reveal Himself in this incident?

* Prayer

Thank God for keeping us upbeat and resilient during tough times. Ask God to strengthen our belief and trust in Jesus in good and bad times.

*©2021 The reThink Group, Inc. All rights reserved.
www.ThinkOrange.com
Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/May2022



BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD05W2>



MON
09

God Himself Is Teaching Us

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

OBSERVATION

What is meant by “taught by God” (v.9)?

APPLICATION

In what ways am I being taught by God in my discipleship journey?

PRAYER

O Lord, in times of difficulty or when I am lost, do not forsake me or leave me. Hold my hand, for I look to You and seek You, and let me find You. Make me to know Your ways, O Lord, and teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me,¹⁷ that I may grow in true understanding and walk in Your wisdom.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE THESSALONIANS WERE “TAUGHT BY GOD TO LOVE

one another”, such that Paul says they “have no need of anyone to write” to them “concerning brotherly love” (v.9). “Taught by God” (*theodidaktos*) is Paul’s shorthand reference to the new covenant promise of the eschatological blessing, “All your children shall be taught by the Lord” (Isa 54:13).¹⁸ *Theodidaktos* refers to “some form of divine instruction”¹⁹. It is “a supernatural working of God” in our hearts.²⁰ For the Thessalonians, it was “the teaching” they “received through the activity of the indwelling Holy Spirit who produced the fruit of the Spirit (Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22)”²¹ – love, which they were practising even “to all the brothers throughout Macedonia” (v.10).

In affirming the Thessalonians of being “taught by God” to the extent that they “have no need of anyone to write” to them, Paul was not instilling in them self-reliance and independence from him. On the contrary, Paul saw the urgent need to give them face-to-face teaching to fill up “what is lacking in your faith”, concerning which he prayed “most earnestly night and day” (1 Thess 3:10). It is clear from Scripture that being personally “taught by God” does not exclude learning from those who are gifted in teaching the Word of God and from one another.

We are “taught by God” not just on love as the Thessalonians, but in all the other things of God as well. God teaches us in knowing, understanding and living out truths in life experience – “theology in actual life”²². Being “taught by God” is experiencing God in life according to His Word.

¹⁷ Psalm 25:4-5

¹⁸ Gary S. Shogren, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2012), 169

¹⁹ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, 1-2 Thessalonians, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 2014), 286

²⁰ Gary S. Shogren, 169

²¹ Gene L. Green, The Letters to the Thessalonians, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Apollos, 2002), 205

²² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (SCM Press, 1974, 2015), xvii

TUE
10

Growing with a Godly Discontentment

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:1, 9-10

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about spiritual growth?

APPLICATION

What areas in my life do I want to grow more and more?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: To pursue God with a godly discontentment
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE THESSALONIANS WERE PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

walking “to please God” (v.1) and “loving one another” (vv.9-10a). But Paul exhorts them, “just as you are doing, **do so more and more**” (vv.1, 10b). We are not only to grow in the Lord, but to grow with a godly discontentment.

The antithesis of godly discontentment is spiritual complacency, disinterest, indifference and laziness. In a true sense, there is no spiritual stagnancy. In the spiritual life, if we do not progress, we regress. Growth is the result of God working in our lives. We progress because God is working in our lives. Where is God when we are regressing spiritually? The foundation of our spiritual life is Christ (1 Cor 3:11). And we are building upon that foundation. The question is not whether we are building or not building. The question is how we build upon the foundation: Is it with “gold, silver and precious stones” or with “wood, hay and straw” (1 Cor 3:12)? And so, Paul exhorts us, “Let each one be careful how he builds upon it” (1 Cor 3:10).

Seeking to grow is a matter of the **heart**. And the seed for spiritual growth is the Word of God. This is clearly taught by Jesus in His Parable of the Sower (Lk 8:11-15). The Word of God is sown on our “**hearts**” (Lk 8:12). Growth by the Word of God is determined by the response of the heart to the Word. Growing with godly discontentment is “hearing the Word, [we] hold it fast in an honest and good **heart**, and bear fruit with perseverance” (Lk 8:15).

WED
11

The Growth Movements of Love

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 4:9-10

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about love as seen in the Thessalonians?

APPLICATION

In what ways do I find love wanting in my life and what will I do about it?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for the Nations: To see Christ in Christians loving each another
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

LOVE HAS THREE GROWTH MOVEMENTS. WE LOVE intensively: “labour of love” (v.3). We love **extensively:** “you are doing to **all** the brothers **throughout Macedonia**” (1 Thess 4:10). We love **progressively:** “do this **more and more**” (1 Thess 4:10).

There is a Christian couple who has a special needs son, whose condition is compounded by other psychological and mental health problems. It has been very challenging and emotionally draining on a daily basis for them to parent their son. And there came a time when they had to face a hard reality: the future of their son. At least at the present moment, in terms of economic value, their son’s future is very bleak. But the world we live in values people in economic terms. Like it or not, this is the world we live in. However, this does not mean we have to conform to it. On the contrary, as disciples of Jesus, we are to live in this world counterculturally, which is not easy.

As this couple pondered upon their son’s future, they thought of the worst-case scenario: He will become a bum. This couple has learned to love their son unconditionally through the difficult journey of parenting him. One day, they had this reflection: “What if God’s one and only one purpose for us to have such a son is to just love him and nothing else? If that is the case, then there is no worst-case scenario for our son!” One day, this couple’s son said to them, “Papa and Mama, thank you for loving me as God would.”

THU
12

To Love Is Not Easy

SCRIPTURE Ephesians 4:1-3, 11-16

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about relationship and love in these passages?

APPLICATION

What challenges do I face in relating with people lovingly and how will I face them?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To love difficult people with patience and kindness
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

OFTENTIMES, THE REASON A PERSON GIVES FOR WANTING to divorce his or her spouse is: “I don’t love you anymore.” What that means is these romantic feelings are not there anymore. That’s not true love. It is actually “I don’t **want** to love you anymore” rather than “I don’t love you anymore”. True love is a commitment. It is not just emotional, but fundamentally volitional.

Love exists in relationship. Love is relational in nature. Relationships can be difficult because people can be difficult. And so, to love is not easy – in all kinds of relationships, including marriage. The ideal hallmark of relationship in Christ is peaceful harmony: “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (v.3). And what does it take for us to relate with others in peaceful harmony? It takes “all humility” (contrast: pride) – mark the words “all”, “gentleness” (contrast: harshness), “patience” (contrast: impatience) and “tolerance” (contrast: intolerance) (v.2). And we are to live out all these “in love” (contrast: unloving). These imply two realities. Relationship is not easy. And peaceful harmony is not smooth sailing relationship without conflicts.

It is in the realm of relationship characterised by “love” that we “grow” to maturity (vv.13, 15-16). When we are in a situation in a relationship where inside us, we are bending toward pride, harshness, impatience and intolerance, it is the moment for us to grow and mature. And we grow in character, for humility, gentleness, patience and loving tolerance are traits of Christlike character. And character is developed, demonstrated and displayed in how we relate with all kinds of people in love.

FRI
13

Living Eschatologically in Everyday Living

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

OBSERVATION

Why does Paul urge the Thessalonians to work with their own hands as he exhorts them to “do more and more” in “brotherly love”?

APPLICATION

What areas in my life do I need to take personal responsibility for?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: To live eschatologically in everyday living
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

BEING “TAUGHT BY GOD TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER” (V.9), the Thessalonians were practising love intensively (1 Thess 1:3) and extensively (v.10a). But in exhorting them “to do this more and more” in “brotherly love” (vv.9-10b), Paul highlights an area where they failed in love: failing “to mind your own business and work with your hands” (v.11, NIV). Paul is referring to a group in the church whom he later identifies as “the idle” (1 Thess 5:14),²³ who were not working to support themselves.

These Thessalonians stopped working because of their mistaken belief that Christ would return within the near future.²⁴ This is alluded to by Paul addressing the issue both directly before (v.11) and after (1 Thess 5:14) his explicit teaching on Christ’s Second Coming (1 Thess 4:13-18; 5:1-11).²⁵ And in this context, these Thessalonians misunderstood that “brotherly love” (v.9) entailed being supported by their brethren.²⁶ Paul’s argument is: To work for one’s own living is a mark of love, because one does not need to depend on the support of fellow believers (v. 12) while giving up work deliberately is a breach of love and becoming a parasite on the church.²⁷

For these slack Thessalonians, living eschatologically means to stop living everyday life normally and responsibly. There is no distinction between the sacred and the secular. Praying in a closet is no more sacred or spiritual than talking with God about your work at your computer. God is to be the centre of everything in our lives, for we are to glorify God even in eating and drinking (1 Cor 10:31).

²³ John R. W. Stott, 87

²⁴ John R. W. Stott, 88

²⁵ G. K. Beale, 128

²⁶ G. K. Beale, 128

²⁷ John R. W. Stott, 88

SAT
14

Growing in Realistic Biblical Discipleship

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

OBSERVATION

Why does Paul mention “so that you may walk properly before outsiders” (v.12) in the context of the passage?

APPLICATION

How will I guard myself from becoming a bad witness as a Christian in the world?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: To shine with God’s light and love at home and in society
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

WHILE THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH WAS PRACTISING LOVE

intensively and extensively, there was deficiency in “brotherly love”, in that among them were those who were not working to support themselves, but leeching their brethren (vv.9-11). The Thessalonians were fervent in evangelism and missions, such that “not only has the word of the Lord sounded from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere” (1 Thess 1:8). Yet, ironically, this missionally impactful church was at the risk of being a bad testimony to their neighbours. Paul urged the Thessalonians who stopped working to “work with your hands” (vv.11-12), not just that they live their lives responsibly, but also “so that you may walk properly before outsiders” (v.12). Their improper conduct in the world would affect the witness of the church. To the world that tends to generalise things, Christians represent the church and the Gospel.

I have discovered from experience that no matter how we may have grown and matured in certain character in our lives, there can still be fault lines in that particular character. Just like the glowing, growing Thessalonian church. In this life we will never arrive, but only to “press on toward the goal” (Phil 3:13-14). The Psalmist says to God, “With my whole heart I seek You” and yet in the same breath he prays, “Let me not wander from Your commandments” (Psa 119:10). It sounds ironic, inconsistent and incongruent. But this is realistic biblical discipleship. We progress by God’s grace with three steps forward and two steps back in humble brokenness.

SUN
15

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

◆ What was my high point and my low point for the week?

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

- ◆ What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 3

Resilience:

Getting back up when something gets you down.

Memory Verse

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."
- Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

* Bottom Line

You can choose joy when life gets hard.*



* Bible Story

Acts 16:16-40 - Paul and Silas in Prison



* Activity

Favourite Worship Song

Get your family members to share their favourite worship song and why they like it:

- How does the song make them feel?
- When do they sing this song (e.g. when they are happy or sad, etc.)?

Sing the songs together as a family.

Say, "God is with us in good and bad times. He deserves our praise and worship because He is worthy. Paul and Silas did not stop praising God and chose to be happy even when they were in jail. How did they do it? We can trust God in all circumstances. Paul and Silas held on to this Truth and did not let their circumstances stop them from trusting God."

* Talk About It

- Why were Paul and Silas able to sing and praise God when they were in jail?
- How does trusting God help us to bounce back?
- What truths can you focus on to help get back up when something gets you down?
- What does it look like to choose to be joyful even when you face difficult circumstances?

Parents: Share with your family members about an experience in which you chose to be joyful amidst a difficult situation. What did you do to keep yourself motivated? How did trusting God help you in this situation?

* Prayer

Thank God for His Word and encouragement. Because of Jesus, we can still smile even when we face unpleasant situations. Pray for unwavering faith and trust in Jesus in everything we plan and do.

*©2021 The reThink Group, Inc. All rights reserved.
www.ThinkOrange.com
Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/May2022



MON
16

The Death of a Christian

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

OBSERVATION

How should we look at the death of Christians?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in how I look at and respond to the death of Christians?

PRAYER

O Lord of the living and the dead,²⁸ deliver me from the fear of dying! Why should I fear death or how I may die? You are the First and the Last, and the Living One, who was dead and are alive forevermore, and You hold the keys of Death and of Hades.²⁹ And if I live, I live for You, O Lord, and if I die, I die for You.³⁰

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE THESSALONIANS WERE “TOTALLY UNPREPARED FOR the experience of bereavement”³¹. The death of their loved ones and friends before Christ’s return “took them by surprise and greatly disturbed them”, as they wondered what would happen to them.³² Paul points them to the “hope” (v.13) of the resurrection of “the dead in Christ” (1 Thess 4:16), which is founded on “Jesus died and rose again” (v.14a). And because of this, “when Jesus returns, God will bring back with Him the believers who have died” (v.14b, NLT).

Now, when Paul says, “you may not grieve” in this context, he does not mean that Christians are not to grieve at all, but rather not as those with “no hope” (v.13). “Bereavement is a very poignant human experience. However firm our Christian faith may be, the loss of a close relative or friend causes profound shock. To lose a loved one is to lose a part of oneself. It calls for radical and painful adjustments, which may take many months.”³³ When the son of Leighton Ford, a Canadian evangelist and mission leader, died at the age of 21, he described his bereavement as “The struggle is to bring our faith and our emotions together” in a combination of “tears, questions and silence”³⁴. And he said, “When you love deeply, you hurt deeply.”³⁵

When Jesus visited the funeral wake of Lazarus, did He excitedly say to the weeping Mary, “Mary, stop weeping! I am going to raise your brother from the dead in a moment!”? No, “Jesus wept”, instead – to share in the grief of the bereaved family (Jn 11:33-35).

²⁸ Romans 14:9²⁹ Revelation 1:7-18³⁰ Romans 14:7-8³¹ John R. W. Stott, 93³² John R. W. Stott, 93³³ John R. W. Stott, 93³⁴ Leighton Ford, *Sandy: A heart for God* (IVP, 1985), 164³⁵ Leighton Ford, 173

TUE
17

The Descending of the Lord

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16; Philippians 2:5-8

OBSERVATION

How are the First Coming and the Second Coming of the Lord similar?

APPLICATION

How do I respond to a God who descends to reach out to me?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: To serve people humbly like God
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE PEOPLE IN THE LAND OF SHINAR WERE BUILDING

“a tower whose top will reach into heaven” to connect with the gods in heaven³⁶ (Gen 11:4). Man-made religions have this same common aim. The builders of the tower at Babel thought their temple tower reached into heaven. But the irony is, it was so low that God had to “come down” from heaven just to see it (Gen 11:5). Humans by themselves can never reach up to God in heaven. It has to be God Himself coming down from heaven to reach out to us on earth.

Paul describes “the coming of the Lord” (v.15) as “the Lord Himself will **descend** from heaven” (v.16). The God of the Bible is the God who comes down to us. It is of great significance for us to reflect on the divine coming down movements in Scripture. Moses led Israel out of the Egyptian bondage to Mount Sinai “to meet God” (Exo 19:1, 17). And for that to happen “the Lord came down” from heaven “on Mount Sinai” (Exo 19:11, 18, 20). Then God descended from Mount Sinai to the Tabernacle to dwell among His people (Exo 25:8; 40:34-35). The most definitive divine coming down to humanity is Jesus “emptied Himself” of His “equality with God” and became human and took on the “form of a bond-servant” (Phil 2:6-7). This humble divine coming down went further down: “death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8).

How will you respond to this God who comes down to you with such humility and grace?

³⁶ Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks, , *Genesis: A Commentary* (Zondervan, 2001), 179

WED
18

The Resurrection and the Rapture

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53

OBSERVATION

What will happen to believers in Christ when the Lord returns?

APPLICATION

What do the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the rapture of living believers at Christ's Second Coming mean to me personally?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for the Nations: To find hope in Christ's Second Coming in this evil world
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

AT "THE COMING OF THE LORD", THERE WILL BE BELIEVERS who have already died and those who are still "alive" (v.15). Two things will happen to believers according to a divine order. First, "the dead in Christ will rise first" (v.16). For those who are "alive", they will not experience resurrection from death, but instead they "will be caught up...in the clouds" – the rapture – and catch up with the resurrected dead, so that "together with them" they will "meet the Lord in the air" (v.17). What will happen to our bodies when all these happen at Christ's return? Christ "will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body" (Phil 3:20-21). Christ will return "with the sound of the trumpet of God" (v.16). Then, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet", "we shall all be changed" and "put on the imperishable" body and "immortality" (1 Cor 15:51-53). This glorious transformation of our bodies is founded on the resurrection of Christ.

We seem to be concerned with how we die. We wish that we will die peacefully in our sleep into God's presence. Christians died in diverse ways. Godly people died of cancer. In the Promised Land filled with God's blessings (Deut 7:12-15), one could be killed by "the head of an axe that slips from the handle" from someone cutting down a tree nearby (Deut 19:5). God's people can die through accidents. What is more important is, while "our outer man is decaying, our inner man is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16-18).

THU
19

Meeting the Lord at Present

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Exodus 19:10-18

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about believers meeting the Lord in these two passages?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in my life regarding meeting the Lord?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To have the hunger for meeting the Lord
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

AT “THE COMING OF THE LORD”, BOTH THE RESURRECTED and raptured believers will “meet the Lord in the air” (vv.16-17). It is our face-to-face meeting with the Lord. But we can meet the Lord at present while waiting for that future ultimate meeting.

God came down on Mount Sinai so that His people may “meet God” (Exo 19:17). This God is an awesome holy God (Exo 19:16, 18). So God commanded Moses to “set bounds all around” for Israel to meet Him (Exo 19:12). There is now no more this setting of bounds, for we can meet God freely, quickly and easily. But be careful of the danger of familiarity breeds contempt. Who God is has never changed – He is still “a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29). What has changed – radically – is our access to God. Now, “we have **confidence** to enter the holy places **by the blood of Jesus**” (Heb 10:19). But still, “Guard your steps as you go to the house of God” (Ecc 5:1).

God commanded Israel to “be ready” to meet Him (Exo 19:11, 15). “Be ready” is an act of the heart. Be ready with a cleansed heart: “let them wash their garments” (Exo 19:10, 14). Be ready with a consecrated heart: “consecrate them” (Exo 19: 10, 14). God required Israel to take three days to be ready (Exo 19:10, 11, 15). Our heart and who God is require the “three days”.

The Coming Lord knocks on the door of our hearts that we may open it and let Him come in to eat with us and we with Him (Rev 3:20).

FRI
20

Always Be with the Lord (1)

SCRIPTURE 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; Genesis 3:8, 24; Exodus 29:46

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the presence of God in these texts?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in my view and attitude concerning the presence of God?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: That God goes before them and be with them in all that they do
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST IS THE FULL RETURN OF the presence of God. At Christ's return, the resurrected and raptured believers will "meet the Lord in the air, **and so** we will **always** be **with the Lord**" (vv.15-17). It is vital for us to understand and appreciate the key historical-theological movements of the temple of God – the representation of the presence of God – in the Bible.

When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they "hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God" (Gen 3:8). Then God "drove man out" of the Garden of Eden, the place of God's presence (Gen 3:24). Sin separates us from the presence of God. However, since then, God seeks to restore fallen humans back to His presence. This redemptive restoration is a divine initiative and pursuit of love and grace. God redeemed Israel from the Egyptian bondage for this purpose: "that I might dwell among them" (Exo 29:46). So, God commanded Israel to "construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them" (Exo 25:8).

King Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem to replace the tabernacle (1 Kin 6-8). But God forewarned that if Israel breaks His covenant, He will destroy His temple (1 Kin 9:6-7). So, when Israel persisted in idolatry, God destroyed His temple by the Babylonians' hand (2 Kin 25:8-9). This signalled the departure of God's presence from His people (2 Kin 23:26-27; 24:20). When Israel returned from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem, they rebuilt the temple – the Second Temple (Ezr 1:1-4; 6:14-15). This marked the return of God's presence to His people.

SAT
21

Always Be with the Lord (2)

SCRIPTURE John 1:14; 2:14-21; 1 Corinthians 6:19

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the temple of God in these texts?

APPLICATION

How does my understanding of the temple of God help me in my discipleship journey?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: That God goes before them and be with them in all that happens to them
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE “GLORY” OF THE SECOND TEMPLE BUILT BY POST-exilic Israel was “like nothing in comparison” to Solomon’s temple (Hag 2:3). The “glory of the Lord filled” the tabernacle (Exo 40:34) and Solomon’s temple (1 Kin 8:10-11). Nothing as such happened to the Second Temple. But God promised, “The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former” (Hag 2:9). This promise was not fulfilled in the “wonderful stones” and “wonderful buildings” of Herod’s temple (Mk 13:1), which was the Second Temple expanded and renovated by King Herod. The promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

After cleansing the temple, Jesus said to the people, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn 2:19). Jesus was speaking of “the temple of His body” (Jn 2:21). Jesus Himself is the Temple of God. Jesus Himself is the very Presence of God. He is “Immanuel” – “God with us” (Matt 1:23). Certainly, no glory can be greater than the “glory” of “the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us” (v.14). Through Christ and His redemptive work, God’s holy presence in the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest can enter and only once a year (Lev 16:2; Heb 9:3, 7), is now indwelling us in Christ as the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). When Christ returns, “we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17). And God who “dwells in unapproachable light” (1 Tim 6:16), “His face” we “will see” (Rev 22:4).

This whole divine pursuit shows how much God desires to be with us!

SUN
22

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

◆ What was my high point and my low point for the week?

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

- ◆ What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 4

Resilience:

Getting back up when something gets you down.

Memory Verse

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."
- Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

* Bottom Line

Trusting God can help you get back up.*

* Bible Story

Hebrews 11 - Heroes of the Faith

* Activity

Toss the Ball

Prop: A lightweight ball

Get your family members to stand in a circle. Toss the ball around, making sure that everyone catches it at least once. Repeat this, but at a faster pace.

Discuss after the activity:

- What did you observe about the ball tossing speed between the first and second round?
- How do you know you can toss the ball to ____ and he or she will receive it?

Say, "God is always faithful. His love for us does not change. The way we toss the ball represents God's love for us. The act of tossing the ball to another person represents our faith in God. By faith, we are assured that the person whom we toss the ball to WILL receive it. By faith, we know God hears us when we pray to Him. By faith, we know God will protect us when we need His help. By faith, we know we receive eternal life when we believe in Him."

* Talk About It

- Share what faith is, in your own words.
- How can our actions show that we have faith or trust in God no matter what?
- How can faith and trusting in God help us get back up again?
- How does knowing stories of God's faithfulness influence our ability to bounce back from a bad situation?

Parents: Share with your family members about an experience in which you chose to do something by faith. How did it help you?

* Prayer

Thank God for His Word and His love for us. Pray for increasing faith and resilience in seeking God in times of need.

*©2021 The reThink Group, Inc. All rights reserved.
www.ThinkOrange.com
Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/May2022



BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD05W4>



MON
23

The Source of Injustice

SCRIPTURE Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-19

OBSERVATION

What resulted from Adam and Eve's sin of disobedience to God's command?

APPLICATION

How do the sinfulness and fallenness of humankind inform my views regarding the source of and solution for injustice in society and the world?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for the forgiveness of my sins when I put my faith in Jesus. On account of His atoning sacrifice on the cross, You have declared me righteous in Your sight. I am a new creation in Christ and have eternal life in Him.³⁷ I no longer face condemnation and have crossed over from death to life.³⁸ I praise You with all my heart for the salvation I have in Christ!³⁹ Amen.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THIS WEEK LEADS UP TO NEW LIFE FRIENDS' DAY. AS WE

reflect on social justice, we recognise that there is a significant amount of injustice around us, such as poverty, discrimination, neglect, bullying, violence, abuse and exploitation. God requires us to do good works, even as we uphold **the centrality and indispensability of the Gospel** for God's redeeming and transforming work in the lives of people. Let us start by considering **the source of injustice**.

Human beings are created in the image of God.⁴⁰ As God's image-bearers, we are unique among God's creatures. We have God-given capacities to relate to God and to serve Him by ruling over the rest of creation as His vice-regents.⁴¹ God, the King of creation, is good, benevolent and kind. His intention is to bless humankind and all living creatures, and provide for their needs and flourishing.⁴²

But God's good design was corrupted by sin – humankind's rebellion and disobedience against God's rule and command (vv.15-17; Gen 3:1-6). Everything went downhill from there. We started to experience shame and guilt.⁴³ As a result of the corruption of sin, humankind experienced pain in life and work, as well as physical death (Gen 3:16-19); depravity from idolatry (Rom 1:21-32); a violence-filled earth (Gen 6:11-12); and a broken created order (Rom 8:19-22). Further, all kinds of injustice began to characterise human relations and experience, such as envy, anger, murder and revenge killing.⁴⁴ People had great wickedness and their thoughts devised nothing but evil all the time.⁴⁵ Clearly, therefore, the source of injustice is sin, the fall of humankind. And ultimately the solution is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.⁴⁶

³⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:16.

³⁸ Romans 8:1; John 5:24.

³⁹ 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10.

⁴⁰ Genesis 1:26-27. When God the Creator created the universe, the earth, vegetation and living creatures, He saw that it was good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21 and 25). After God created humankind – the pinnacle of creation – He saw that all that He had created was very good (Gen 1:31).

⁴¹ Genesis 1:26, 28.

⁴² Genesis 1:22, 28, 29-30.

⁴³ This can be seen in Adam and Eve's attempts to cover their naked bodies from each other's sight and hide physically from God's presence (Gen 3:7-8. Cf. Gen 2:25).

⁴⁴ Genesis 4:8, 23-24.

⁴⁵ Genesis 6:5.

⁴⁶ Romans 1:16-17.

TUE
24

The End of Injustice

SCRIPTURE 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-5

OBSERVATION

What has God promised to do regarding injustice, wickedness and evil?

APPLICATION

How should I go about working to reduce injustice in society?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: To wisely and boldly lead the church in evangelism and social action
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THERE WILL COME A DAY WHEN INJUSTICE NO LONGER exists (vv.10-13). As promised, God will create new heavens and a new earth,⁴⁷ and fully and finally deliver the world from evil and wickedness forever.⁴⁸ That day is coming soon. It is known variously as “the day of the Lord”, “the day of judgment”, “the appearing of the Lord” and “the Second Coming of Christ”. On that day, God “will wipe away every tear from [His people’s] eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (Rev 21:4). God has said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” (Rev 21:5).

In view of the above, let us consider the following four aspects in relation to social action:

- **Perspective:** Injustice will never be fully eradicated apart from God’s timetable and action. It requires the complete destruction of everyone in whom any wickedness or evil resides.⁴⁹ That means every unjustified human being!⁵⁰ Therefore, Christians should both proclaim the Gospel and work to reduce injustice in society.
- **Posture:** Christians are servants of God and His representatives in the world. We have been commanded to love our neighbours and even our enemies.⁵¹
- **Practical Outworking:** Christians need to know how best to engage in political discussion and social action. We must not blindly adopt Western approaches nor unthinkingly leverage technology. Understanding people’s sensitivities and situational realities, our passion to act must be balanced with the patience to see results.
- **Power:** Power ultimately belongs to God.⁵² We need to learn to depend on God’s power through perseverance and boldness in our prayers.

⁴⁷ Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; Romans 8:21; Revelation 21:1.

⁴⁸ Isaiah 60:21; 65:25; Revelation 21:8, 27.

⁴⁹ Revelation 21:8; 22:3.

⁵⁰ Only those justified by faith in Jesus Christ will not be condemned: Romans 5:1-2; 8:1-2.

⁵¹ Mark 12:28-34; Luke 6:27-36.

⁵² Psalm 62:11; 2 Corinthians 4:7.

WED
25

Why Do Justice?

SCRIPTURE Amos 5:21-24

OBSERVATION

What incongruence do you observe in this passage?

APPLICATION

What can I do – personally and together with my discipleship community – to “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream”?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for the Nations: That Singaporean Christians will promote and practise social justice not just in our nation, but also in the surrounding nations
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

WE CANNOT WORSHIP GOD IN AN ACCEPTABLE AND PLEASING

way if we continually practise or are complicit in injustice. The true worship of God must include in its expression the practice of social justice. We learn this from the book of Amos. God through His prophet Amos strongly denounced and rejected the worship rituals and sacrifices carried out by the people of Israel in eighth century B.C.⁵³ Both the northern and southern kingdoms were enjoying great prosperity and power, but at the same time there were widespread practices of idolatry, extravagant lifestyles, sexual immorality, corruption of judicial procedures and oppression of the poor in their society.⁵⁴

How can God’s people let injustice reign and expect that their acts of corporate worship will whitewash their sinful practices or cause God to overlook their acquiescence in wickedness? How can God’s people participate in injustice while at the same time participate in worship as though it was okay with Him? The true worship of God by Christians must include the **daily practices of righteousness** – as empowered by the Holy Spirit – in their homes, neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces, business centres, recreational spaces and the digital world! When Christ’s disciples faithfully do justice in their society, they **represent rightly God’s love, mercy and grace to others, shine brightly for His glory and point clearly to Jesus Christ – the One who is able to redeem sinful and broken people**. As theologian Dr Walter R. Strickland II rightly pointed out, we do justice **“to participate in God’s plan of redemption through Christ and reflect his character throughout all creation in anticipation of the kingdom to come”**⁵⁵.

⁵³ Amos’ prophetic ministry was carried out in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reigns of Uzziah (792-740 B.C.) in the southern kingdom and Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C.) in the north, and focused probably between 760 and 750 B.C. See: Amos 1:1; <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-amos/>

⁵⁴ <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-amos/> See for example, Amos 2:6-8; 4:1; 5:10-12; 6:1-6; 8:4-6.

⁵⁵ A Biblical-Theological Vision of Social Engagement and Biblical Justice – Christ and Culture (sebs.edu).

THU
26

The Champion of Justice

SCRIPTURE Psalm 146

OBSERVATION

What are the things that the Lord does, for which the Psalmist greatly praises Him?

APPLICATION

How can I reflect God's heart and His ways to society and indeed the world?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To reflect God's heart and His ways to our society and the Asian nations
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

GOD KEEPS FAITH FOREVER; HE FULFILS ALL HIS PROMISES

(v.6b). Therefore, people everywhere can put their trust in God, look to Him for help, and always hope in Him (vv.3-6). It is futile to put our trust in other people – even those with earthly power and authority. They cannot ultimately deliver us (v.3), because they are transient (v.4). We should instead trust in God the Creator of the universe, because He is eternal (v.6).

God does justice! He is the Champion of justice! Verses 7 to 9 tell us clearly that God's heart beats with compassion for "the oppressed", "the hungry", "the prisoners", "the blind", "those who are bowed down", "the righteous", "the sojourners", "the widow" and "the fatherless". Therefore, God executes justice on their behalf, feeds them, sets them free from captivity and bondage, gives them sight, lifts them up from depression and despondency, shows them His love, watches over and protects them, and supports and defends them. God cares deeply for the weak, the poor, the powerless, the ill-treated, the hopeless, the disabled, the burdened, the trapped, the minorities, the destitute and the defenceless. God acts directly as well as through His agents to help them. Of all people, God's people are to be His faithful representatives in their society and in the world!

Brothers and sisters, do our hearts beat likewise for such people? What have we done to help and support the poor and needy in our land? Will we both pray for them and take decisive action on their behalf? What will you begin to do or continue doing in order to serve them?

FRI
27

Live a Righteous Life

SCRIPTURE Mark 12:28-34; Luke 6:27-36

OBSERVATION

Why are the two commandments cited by Jesus in verses 29 to 31 so important?

APPLICATION

In what ways can I love the people around me as myself (v.31) and do to them what I wish they would do to me (Lk 6:31)? (Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to do so.)

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: That the Holy Spirit will empower them to love their neighbours as themselves and even their enemies
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

FOR CHRISTIANS, FLOWING FROM OUR RIGHT RELATIONSHIP with God (through faith in Jesus Christ) ought to be right relationships with the people around us. Regarding the latter, the Lord Jesus commanded a radical righteousness that involves loving our neighbours as ourselves and even our enemies (v.31; Lk 6:27, 31 and 35). May God enable us to live righteous lives for His glory!

What is the relationship between our vertical relationship with God, our horizontal relationships with other people and the biblical concept of justice? Pastor Timothy Keller explains:¹

The Hebrew word for “justice”, *mishpat*, occurs in its various forms more than 200 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. Its most basic meaning is to treat people equitably. It means acquitting or punishing every person on the merits of the case, regardless of race or social status. ...But *mishpat* means more than just the punishment of wrongdoing. It also means giving people their rights. ...*Mishpat*, then, is giving people what they are due, whether punishment or protection or care.

We get more insight when we consider a second Hebrew word that can be translated as “being just”, though it is usually translated as “being righteous”. The word is *tzadeqah*, and it refers to a life of right relationships...day-to-day living in which a person conducts all relationships in family and society with fairness, generosity and equity. It is not surprising, then, to discover that *tzadeqah* and *mishpat* are brought together scores of times in the Bible. ...Therefore, though *tzadeqah* is primarily about being in a right relationship with God, the righteous life that results is profoundly social.

¹ Cited by Joe Carter in this article 'The FAQs: What Christians Should Know About Social Justice.' <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/faqs-christians-know-social-justice/>

SAT
28Go Therefore
and Do Justice

SCRIPTURE Micah 6:6-8

OBSERVATION

What is the nature of worship that God requires of His people and is pleased with?

APPLICATION

What social engagement(s) will I start (or continue) in order to do justice in my society?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: That they and the New Life Board will collaborate and lead the church to do justice in Singapore
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

GOD CLEARLY REQUIRES AND CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO DO justice wherever they live. Today's Scripture text contains verses familiar to many Christians. What do they mean for Christians today? The prophet Micah ministered in Judah during the reigns of kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Mic 1:1)⁵⁷, most likely between 735 and 700 B.C.⁵⁸ The social conditions there were similar to those in the northern kingdom of Israel in the prophet Amos' day. Like Amos, Micah spoke out strongly against the people of Israel, denouncing the wealthy and powerful in society for practising injustice against the poor and the weak, and warning of God's impending judgment. The preceding chapters tell us that the powerful seized fields and houses belonging to others (Mic 2:1-2), the leaders oppressed the people (Mic 3:1-3); the heads and judges perverted justice for bribes, and the priests and prophets coveted money (Mic 3:9-11; 7:2-3); and businesspeople dealt dishonestly (Mic 6:10-12).

The word "justice" (v.8. Hebrew *mishpat*) means to treat people equitably. Micah answered his own questions in verses 6 and 7 by pointing out that God delights in righteous attitudes rather than rituals and sacrifices. He is pleased when His people do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with Him (v.8). How should we do justice in our society? First, let us care for the poor, weak and vulnerable members of society.⁵⁹ Second, let us inspire and encourage one another to use our resources to help those in need.⁶⁰ Third, let us do our part to promote the freedom of religion and safeguard the values of love and respect for fellow human beings, God's image-bearers.⁶¹

⁵⁷ The prophet Isaiah also prophesied during this period (Isa 1:1).

⁵⁸ <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-micah/>

⁵⁹ For example, widows, single mothers, orphans, youths at risk, unborn babies, the elderly poor and migrant workers.

⁶⁰ Indeed, as one senior Christian leader rightly pointed out, one major problem facing the Singapore Church is materialism.

⁶¹ The past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic have shone a spotlight on how Singaporeans have treated the migrant workers in our land and the need for us to repent and do much better. Christian Singaporeans must rise up to show the way forward in respecting, appreciating and helping the migrant workers. They face many difficulties in seeking a better life for themselves and their families back home. For example, to get a job in Singapore through multiple agents, a migrant construction worker can get into a debt of up to S\$11,000, which will take years for him to repay: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-54654813>

SUN
29

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

◆ What was my high point and my low point for the week?

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

- ◆ What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 5

Resilience:

Getting back up when something gets you down.

Memory Verse

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."
- Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

* Bottom Line

Keep going because of what Jesus did for you.*

* Bible Story

Hebrews 12:1-3 - Keep Looking to Jesus

* Activity

Scripture

Prop: A Bible

Select a Bible verse. Ask your family members to memorise it within a certain time, say six minutes.

Rules:

- Everyone has to recite it without any mistakes.
- If someone makes a mistake, everyone has to start all over again until it is recited without error in one attempt.

Reward everyone with a prize (e.g. ice cream or a drink) when (b) is completed. Discuss after the activity:

- How did you feel when your family had to recite the verse all over again?
- Did you feel like giving up? Why? What stopped your family from moving forward?

Say, "Jesus knew He was going to the cross and would experience immense pain. Yet, Jesus was determined to finish the race. He did not give up. What was He thinking? What kept Him going? Jesus will never give up on us. When we face a difficult task or feel like giving up, we can always look to Jesus."

* Talk About It

- What does the Bible verse "Let us keep looking to Jesus" mean?
- If we want to win a race, what important things do we have to do?
- What stops us from bouncing back?
- What has Jesus done for us?
- How can remembering what Jesus did for us help us to keep going?

Parents: Share an experience in which you remembered what Jesus did for you and how this kept you going. How was God involved in this process? What did you learn about God?

* Prayer

Thank Jesus for dying on the cross for our sins. Ask God to help us anchor our hope in Him - no matter what.

©2021 The reThink Group, Inc. All rights reserved.
www.ThinkOrange.com
Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/May2022



BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD05W5>



MON
30

Meaning of “End Times”

SCRIPTURE Hebrews 1:1-2; Acts 2:14-21; 1 Corinthians 10:6-11

OBSERVATION

How do you understand the term “the last days”?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to live in the last days?

PRAYER

Lord, I thank You that You have forewarned in Your Word that in the last days difficult times will come.⁶² So, I pray, Lord, be my strength and my salvation, and make me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon whatever challenging heights.⁶³ But in times when my flesh and my heart fail, be the strength of my heart.⁶⁴

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

MANY CHRISTIANS THINK OF “THE LAST DAYS” ONLY AS A period at the very end of history. “The popular understanding in the church today that the latter days concerns only the yet future end of the world needs correction.”⁶⁵

God is the Creator King of the universe who rules over the whole history of humankind. The history of humankind is framed by God’s creation of the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1) and the “new heavens and new earth” (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1), and pivotally and climatically marked by two defining historical-theological events: the First Coming and Second Coming of Christ. The First Coming of Christ is defined by God as “the fullness of the time” (Gal 4:4). Jesus, who Himself embodies the kingdom of God, defined the beginning of His messianic ministry as “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15). God, after He spoke long ago in the prophets in many portions and in many ways (in the Old Testament), “in these last days has spoken to us in His Son” (vv.1-2). The First Coming of Christ was the most definitive self-revelation of God in human form – God “has spoken in His Son” – and this marked the beginning of the “last days”. The descent of the promised Holy Spirit on Pentecost was “in the last days” (Acts 2:17). The “last days” has begun already in the first century at Christ’s First Coming and continues on into our present day. Believers in Christ are people “upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor 10:11).

⁶² 2 Timothy 3:1

⁶³ Habakkuk 3:18-19

⁶⁴ Psalm 73:26

⁶⁵ G. K. Beale, 19

TUE
31

Christ Returning in This Generation?

SCRIPTURE James 5:7-8; Revelation 22:7, 20

OBSERVATION

How are we to look at the Second Coming of Christ?

APPLICATION

How is being patient until the coming of the Lord relevant to me?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: To grow in patience with a strengthened heart
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH, EVERY generation thinks that Christ will return in their generation. Just to give perspective: the great reformer Martin Luther and his generation also thought so.

Martin Luther’s “numerous pronouncements on the end of all things are reminiscent of statements made often before his time...Luther lived in a stormy age, seething with new ideas and revolutionary concepts and groaning with the agonies of a laborious rebirth (renaissance). He stood in the midst of the tempest that resulted in many ideological and armed conflicts; but what caused the greatest anxiety to his age, especially 1528 to 1530, was the constant menace of the Ottoman onslaught. This threat had been hovering over the West ever since the Mohammedans succeeded, in 711, in entering Europe by the western gate of Spain; and the situation became alarming when later the seemingly irresistible pressure from the East placed Europe in a huge pincer which threatened to crush it. As the Ottomans approached Vienna, the mounting anxiety was reflected in Luther’s writings and talks. This caused him to preach a crusade against the Ottomans. (Luther applied Gog and Magog to the Ottomans [Eze 38-39; Rev 20:7-10]). And Luther was so impressed by the precariousness of the times in 1528 that he expected the end to come before he had time to finish the translation of the Old Testament”⁶⁶.

“The coming of the Lord is near” (Jas 5:8). As to when, we never know. But this we know: Every day is one day nearer. And our posture must be: Be urgent and patient – without the unnecessary “eschatological hypes”.

⁶⁶ www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1951/12/martin-luther

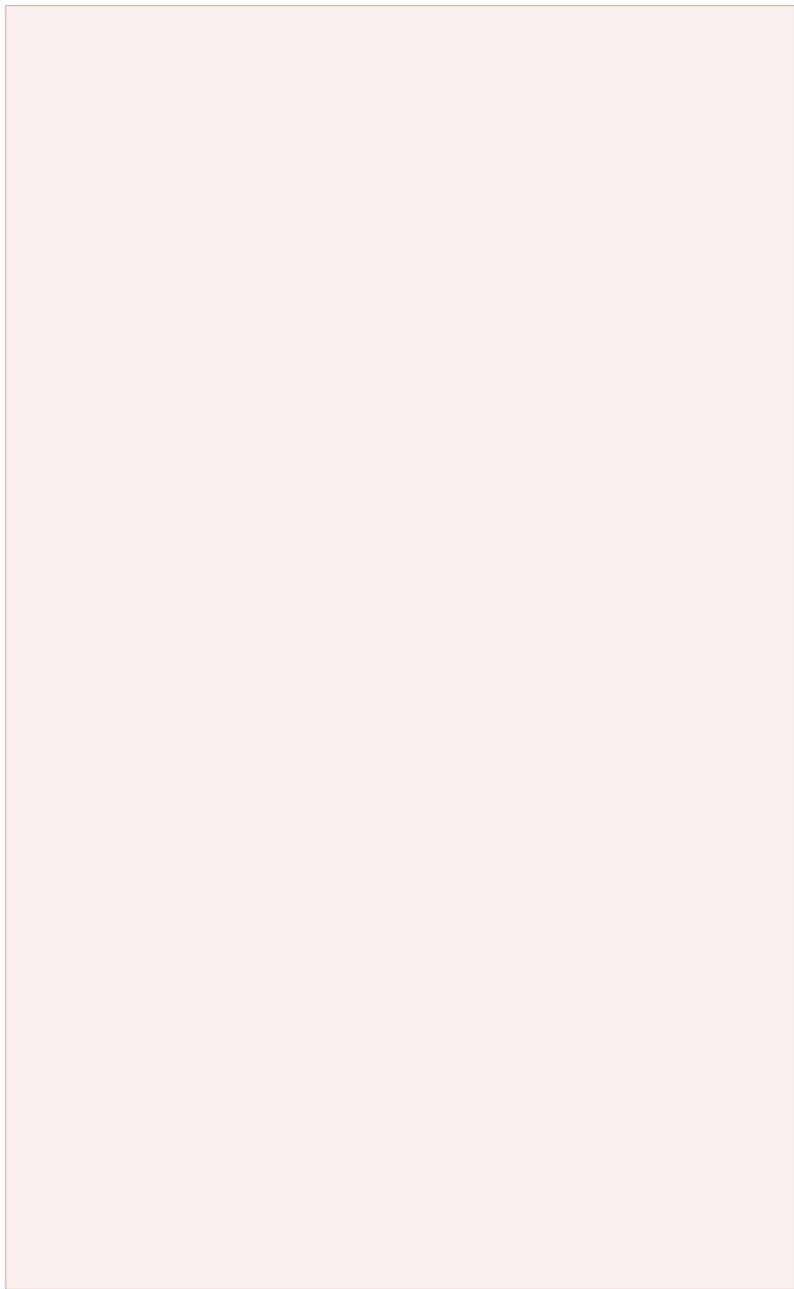
NOTES

A large, empty rectangular area with a light beige background, intended for writing notes. It is bounded by a thin, dark brown line.

NOTES

A large, empty rectangular area with a light beige background, intended for writing notes. It is bounded by a thin, dark brown line.

NOTES



COVENANT EFC

© 2022 Covenant Evangelical Free Church

 (65) 6892 6811 •  mail@cefc.org.sg •  www.cefc.org.sg